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#### THE GEMS (1955):

Rip Reed, Wilson James, Ray Pettis (with record), Bobby Robinson, David Taylor.

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# the SPANIELS

"WE SOUNDED LIKE A BUNCH OF DOGS!"

An interview with Pookie Hudson  
By Alan Lee & Donna Hennings

Gary, Indiana is famous for three things: steel mills, The Jackson Five, and Spaniels. Not cockers, but The Spaniels - one of the first mid-west vocal groups to become popular in the 1950's.

In a decade of bird-named groups and imitative sounds, The Spaniels remained unique. During a recent interview, James "Pookie" Hudson, their lead singer, told us how the group was named.

"At one time our group was called Pookie Hudson and The Hudsonnairs, but I really did not like that. While we were thinking of a new name, the bass singer's wife told us that we sounded like a "bunch of dogs," so we named ourselves The Spaniels.

Pookie, noted as being one of the great tenor lead voices of the 50's, explained how the group was formed: like many vocal groups, The Spaniels met in high school - Roosevelt High in Gary.

"I was singing by myself at the time and didn't want a group," Pookie said. "I was going to sing on a talent show just before Christmas when Gerald Gregory (bass), Ernest Warren (1st tenor), Opal Courtney Jr. (baritone) and Willie C. Jackson (baritone), approached me in the hall and asked if they could sing with me. I didn't want them to, so I suggested that we ask the music teacher; if she said all right, I would let them sing. She fooled me and said OK!"

"We were in the eleventh grade at the time," Pookie continued, "and we sang together on talent shows, for churches, and for other activities around Gary."

The Spaniels' first big break came about when Vivian Carter (of Vee-Jay Records in Chicago) discovered the group's versatility and released their first record, BABY IT'S YOU in 1953 on her label.

"Vee-Jay was originally going to be called Spaniel, but it was changed to Vee-Jay using the first initials of Vivian and her husband, Jimmy Bracken," Pookie explained. BABY IT'S YOU started to sell so it was leased to the Chance label, because Vivian felt they could distribute it better. It was a big hit, and again it wasn't, but it gave us all jobs and led us to GOODNIGHT, SWEETHEART, GOODNIGHT in 1954, and after that we didn't look back for a while."

Pookie said that he wrote most of the group's songs, but not in the conventional manner. "I didn't sit down and write a particular song; we would walk the streets and sing, and as we sang, we improvised the words and the tunes." GOODNIGHT, SWEETHEART, GOODNIGHT was one of those songs.

Interesting note: many people familiar with GOODNIGHT, SWEETHEART, GOODNIGHT have said that bassman Gerald Gregory tried to imitate the sound of a saxophone at various points in the record. Pookie refuted this by saying that "it was Gerald's idea to keep us on pitch. We never did it as a gimmick."

GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART GOODNIGHT was covered by several other artists, including Gloria Mann, and the McGuire Sisters. "At that time,

black artists weren't getting any airplay," Pookie noted. "So when white artists took over a song, they got all the publicity and made the most money from it. The McGuire Sisters had the biggest hit with GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART and sold over a million copies. We couldn't succeed where whites could, because we couldn't get the audience."

Pookie also mentioned that most of the labels of the songs he has written list Calvin Carter, Vivian's brother and Vee-Jay's A&R man, as co-writer. "He put in a couple of words here and there, and ended up getting co-writer credit." When we asked Pookie if he thought The Spaniels were taken advantage of by recording companies, he replied that Vee-Jay had treated the group fairly. "Unfortunately we didn't try to make things any better for ourselves by learning the legal ropes," Pookie said. "We took it for granted that the company would do what it was supposed to; so we really didn't receive all of our rightful royalties."

The first big money-maker for The Spaniels was GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART, but LET'S MAKE UP (1955) brought Pookie his first financial success as author. Oddly enough, even though the song was recorded by The Spaniels, most of the royalties came about because the song was put on the flip side of THE BALLAD OF DAVY CROCKETT by The Voices of Walter Schumann (Victor label #20-6041).

The original Spaniels broke up in 1955. Pookie attributes the split to a "few internal problems" - and the draft. Opal Courtney was the first to go to Uncle Sam. Calvin Carter, a passable baritone, replaced him for a couple of months, but the job was permanently filled by baritone James "Dimples" Cochran. Guitarist Jerome Henderson was also present during this period. Soon after, Ernest Warren was drafted too, but not replaced. Thus, the DEAR HEART session only had four voices. Then the group really fell apart: Pookie and Willie Jackson left too. "Our records weren't selling as well as they had been," he continued, "and I quit for a year." Gerald Gregory kept The Spaniels going with Cochran, second tenor Don Porter and lead tenor Carl Rainge. In late 1956 Pookie re-joined this group and "we recorded FALSE LOVE, PLEASE DON'T TEASE, PEACE OF MINE, STORMY WEATHER and EVERYONE'S LAUGHING, although a substitute bass was used in the latter. This group also did LITTLE JOE, THE POSSE, BABY SWEETS, RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET and A LOVELY WAY TO SPEND AN EVENING."

"We toured around the Country and got into the same bind. We weren't interested in the deal the record company was giving us, so we stayed out of the recording business and ended up by breaking up again."

Pookie regrouped The Spaniels again in the early 60's with Gerald, Andy Magruder (lead of The 5 Bluenotes on Sabre, later to record as Andy Mack on Chess), Billy Carey, Ernest Warren, and guitarist Pete Simmons, and they recorded I KNOW, SO DEEP WITHIN (with bassman Gregory doing the lead) and BUS FARE HOME.

The Spaniels were offered THE TWIST several months before Hank Ballard came out with his



version, which is unusual because it is commonly believed that Hank Ballard created the song. "When we used to come to Washington, D.C.," Pookie explained, "we stayed in a place called The Casbah. One particular night we were there, a spiritual group, named The Nightingales were appearing at the same time. They sang THE TWIST for us and asked if we wanted it. They hadn't put their name on it because they were a spiritual group, and at that time it was kind of taboo for spirituals and rock and roll to be mixed.

"I liked the song myself, but as a whole, the group didn't so we forgot about it; and the next thing we knew, Hank Ballard had it out. We might not have had the same success as Hank or Chubby Checker did; because it was not our kind of song at that time," he added.

When Andy Magruder and Gerald Gregory left this group, road manager Ricky Burden filled in on bass and they recorded FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS and MEEK MAN for Neptune. Pookie then recorded the Jamie sides as solos. On I KNOW, I KNOW (not to be confused with the Vee-Jay song I KNOW) and JEALOUS HEART, the group backing Pookie is The Imperials - without Little Anthony. They were released on Lloyd Price and Dan Logan's Double-L label. Another song from the session was FAIRY TALES, which was the first of three records to come out in the late 60's on Pookie's own North American label. National distribution was attempted with FAIRY TALES, when the song was put out on Nate McCalla's Calla label (a Roulette subsidiary). By this time, Pookie had formed a new Spaniels' group consisting of his old guitarist Pete Simmons (who now additionally sang bass), Charles Douglas (first tenor), Alvin Wheeler (second tenor) and Alvin Lloyd (also known as Sonny West - baritone). With Douglas replaced by Andrew Lawyer (formerly of The Trutones), this group made the other recordings on North American, Parkway and Buddah. With the addition of guitarist Jack Harrington, they're still together today.

One of Pookie's most unusual records was his 1962 Parkway release TURN OUT THE LIGHTS. Although it was never intended to have a C&W flavor, the record actually began to sell well in the Country field, illustrating the versatility of Pookie's style.

The Spaniels' last release came out in 1974, when three of the old Spaniels, Donald Porter, Carl Rainge, and Dimples Cochran contacted Pookie from Chicago. Along with bass Lester Williams, they recorded a unique three-sided E.P. on Henry Parag's Canterbury label out of Gary, Indiana. One of these cuts is a modern rendition of The Spaniels' classic PEACE OF MIND; and another is an accapella version of the old standard DANNY BOY, which sounds very much like The Spaniels of 1954.

Pookie Hudson is one of the few singers from the fifties who has remained active in the music business for over twenty years. Pookie has lived in Washington, D.C. since the early 60's, and a new album is anticipated shortly.



#### THE SPANIELS:

(TOP-1955): (TOP) WILLIE JACKSON, GERALD GREGORY, ERNEST WARREN, JAMES HUDSON

(BOT) JEROME HENDERSON

(MIDDLE-1957): CARL RAINGE, JAMES COCHRAN, JAMES HUDSON, DONALD PORTER, GERALD GREGORY

(LEFT-1960): (TOP) ANDREW MAGRUDER, JAMES HUDSON, ERNEST WARREN, GERALD GREGORY, BILL CAREY  
(BOT) PETE SIMMONS



SPANIELS DISCOGRAPHY

ALL LEADS BY POOKIE HUDSON, EXCEPT AS NOTED

VEE-JAY

101	BABY IT'S YOU	(100)	1953
	BOUNCE (LEAD: GERALD GREGORY)	(103)	

CHANCE

1141	BABY, IT'S YOU	(VJ53-100)	1953
	BOUNCE	(VJ53-103)	

VEE-JAY

103	THE BELLS RING OUT	(110)	1953
	HOUSECLEANING (LEAD: GERALD GREGORY)	(111)	
107	GOODNIGHT, SWEETHEART, GOODNIGHT	(112)	1953
	YOU DON'T MOVE ME	(125)	
116	LET'S MAKE UP	(172)	1954
	PLAY IT COOL (LEAD: WILLIE C. JACKSON)	(173)	
131	DO-WAH	(124)	1955
	DON'CHA GO	(240)	
154	PAINTED PICTURE	(298)	1955
	HEY SISTER LIZZIE (LEAD: ERNEST WARREN)	(299)	
178	FALSE LOVE	(391)	1956
	DO YOU REALLY	(389)	
189	DEAR HEART	(388)	1956
	WHY WON'T YOU DANCE	(390)	
202	SINCE I FELL FOR YOU (ECHO IS WILLIE C. JACKSON)	(102)	7/56
	BABY COME ALONG WITH ME	(387)	
229	YOU GAVE ME PEACE OF MIND	(574)	12/56
	PLEASE DON'T TEASE	(571)	
246	EVERYONE'S LAUGHING	(637)	1957
	I.O.U.	(639)	
257	YOU'RE GONNA CRY	(723)	1957
	I NEED YOUR KISSES	(573)	
264	I LOST YOU	(638)	1958
	CRAZEE BABEE	(795)	
278	TINA	(876)	4/58
	GREAT GOOGLEY MOO	(875)	
290	STORMY WEATHER	(874)	8/58
	HERE IS WHY I LOVE YOU	(934)	
301	BABY, IT'S YOU (DIFFERENT VERSION)	(1004)	12/58
	HEART AND SOUL	(1002)	
310	TREES	(1003)	1959
	I LIKE IT LIKE THAT (LEAD: JAMES COCHRAN)	(722)	
328	100 YEARS FROM TODAY	(1252)	9/59
	THESE THREE WORDS	(1253)	
342	PEOPLE WILL SAY WE'RE IN LOVE	(1258)	1959
	THE BELLS RING OUT	(110)	
350	I KNOW	(1425)	1960
	BUS FARE HOME (DUET LEAD: POOKIE AND ANDY MAGRUDER)	(1426)	1960

OTHER VEE-JAY RECORDINGS:

LITTLE JOE  
 THE POSSE  
 BABY SWEETS (LEAD: JAMES COCHRAN)  
 RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET  
 A LOVELY WAY TO SPEND AN EVENING  
 SO DEEP WITHIN (LEAD: GERALD GREGORY)

PRISCILLA BOWMAN - BACK-UP BY SPANIELS

ABNER 1018	ROCKIN' GOOD WAY I AIN'T GIVING UP NOTHING		1958
NEPTUNE 124	FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS MEEK MAN	(0368) (0367)	1961
JAMIE 1319	ALL THE PLACES I'VE BEEN (POOKIE SOLO) THIS GETS TO ME (POOKIE SOLO)	(J-PHU-1) (J-PHU-2)	1962
DOUBLE-L 711	I KNOW, I KNOW (WITH IMPERIALS) JEALOUS HEART (WITH IMPERIALS)	(711 A) (711 B)	
720	FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS (OLD MASTERS MIRACLES FROM THE NEPTUNE GROUP)		
NORTH AMERICAN NA001	FAIRY TALES (WITH IMPERIALS) JEALOUS HEART (WITH IMPERIALS)		LATE 60'S
NA002	STAND IN LINE LONELY MAN		EARLY 70'S
S3114	COME BACK TO THESE ARMS MONEY BLUES		
CALLA 172	FAIRY TALES JEALOUS HEART	(172-A-1) (172-B-2)	EARLY 70'S
PARKWAY 839	TURN OUT THE LIGHTS JOHN BROWN	(42945) (42945X)	
BUDDAH 153	GOODNIGHT, SWEETHEART, GOODNIGHT (DIFFERENT VERSION)	(BUD 5315) (BUD 5316)	
CANTERBURY EP 101	PEACE OF MIND (DIFFERENT VERSION) DANNY BOY (ACCAPELLA) SHE SANG TO ME	(101A) (101B) (101B)	1974
LOST NITE 307	THIS IS A LOVELY WAY TO SPEND AN EVENING RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET		
OWL 328	LITTLE JOE THE POSSE		

SPANIELS' LP'S:

VEE-JAY VJLP 1002	GOODNIGHT, IT'S TIME TO GO (ORIGINAL ON BROWN LABEL - REISSUE ON BLACK)	1957
VJLP 1024	SPANIELS	1960
LOST NITE LP 137	SPANIELS (DOUBLE LP)	
UPFRONT UPF 131	HITS OF THE SPANIELS	

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ALVIN WHEELER, JAMES HUDSON, PETE  
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# the GEMS

## AND THE DREXEL LABEL

By Bob Stallworth

Based on interviews with Ray Pettis & Paul King

One of the smoothest (if not the smoothest) black vocal group to emerge from the midwest in the fifties was The Gems. Although none of their recordings ever achieved hit status, they are all sought-after collectors' items today, not only for their rarity, but also for their beauty.

The members of the group were neighborhood friends from Evanston, Illinois which is the Northeast border of Chicago. The members then (1952) and throughout the group's career were: Ray Pettis (lead), Bobby "Pee-Wee" Robinson (1st tenor and guitar), David "Moose" Taylor (2nd tenor), Wilson James (baritone & bass), and Rip Reed (bass). With the exception of Wilson James, each still resides in Evanston.

In their formative years, the group rehearsed such songs as CRYING IN THE CHAPEL, GOODNITE SWEETHEART and I WAS WRONG just to name a few. They sang such songs as those at dances, clubs in the Chicago area prior to recording (unfortunately, after the records began to come, they played the same places, only more often), and strolling down the streets of Evanston. According to Paul Stewart (a barber in Evanston at the time): "They were always singing and they sounded good. Everyone knew that they could sing."

Just how Drexel Records was initiated is vague, but The Gems were featured on each of Drexel's first four releases. Drexel apparently had no offices to speak of as the 1954-55 Chicago Yellow Pages make no mention of Drexel. The label was owned by Paul King, Les Caldwell, and ? (whom King will not identify) and was operated from King's home on the South Side of Chicago. The group rehearsed at a friend's house (Johnny Hauser) and all of their recordings were made at Universal Recording Studios. They never saw a company office!

The first recording session produced three sides for the group (also Drexel's first three recordings). DEED I DO and TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER were released as Drexel 901. The first issues had DREXEL printed over a wavy line across the top of the label and were pressed only on red plastic. The title print and group name are larger than the printing on any other Drexel 45. The 2nd label design was that of the familiar printing and was on black plastic. Both sides were ballads with "Talk" slightly up-tempo. The record was a minor hit in Chicago and to some extent in the South and East according to Pettis. When The Gems asked King how the record was doing, he would reply, "It's Still Raining."

The next session saw The Gems doing the standard OL' MAN RIVER and a few more sides. At this session King recorded a local Evanston female vocalist, Dorothy Logan. First SMALL TOWN MAN was recorded which even at the session did little for King. He then decided to use The Gems to back her up on the B side, SINCE I FELL FOR YOU. The record received little promotion and was a flop.

The next release was I THOUGHT YOU'D CARE (later recorded by The Skyscrapers for Mercury) and KITTY FROM NEW YORK CITY. Though this is one of the group's better efforts, the record was a flop. Next, King tried pairing OL' MAN

RIVER and YOU'RE TIRED OF LOVE. Again, though hauntingly beautiful, negligible record sales.

With groups beginning to pop up everywhere, King had good reason to find another one for the stable, especially since The Gems weren't hitting. He gambled and cut two sides by a new group, The Gay Notes. FOR ONLY A MOMENT and PU PU PA DO were issued as D-905. MOMENT had a slight calypso tinge to it and the record was a minor hit locally. I've been unable to find anything about this group, except that they were from Chicago.

Up until this time, the group had never received a penny from Drexel. They "managed themselves" for local gigs and therefore did not run into the costs of a manager. Reed remembers dancing too close to the edge of the stage one night and a woman nearly dragged him off by trying to get his handkerchief as a souvenir. Needless to say, the group was popular locally.

Drexel then cut two sides by both Dave Turner and by Hattie Randolph which were released, flopped, and no other records were released by either artist.

At the next recording session, eight sides were cut, four by Pettis as solos. PLEASE TELL ME WHEN was released and did not sell well. King then released ONE WOMAN MAN and THE DARKEST NIGHT. This record reached as high as #13 on the November 17, 1956 WGES-Chicago Top 40 survey. According to Pettis, King finally "broke down" and gave each member of the group a \$5.00 advance on their next record. This was the catalyst for the group's dissolution. After a quick release by Bobby Elvin as D-910, Pettis can be heard doing two Christmas songs on Drexel 911, and the last Gems' release was TILL THE DAY I DIE. This last release also sold fairly well locally.

Drexel releases after 912 were sporadic. While D-912 was released in early 1957, D-918 was not cut until 1958. The last three issues of the discography below are by Roy Wright. All are city blues and jump sides though D-918 WHO'LL VOLUNTEER does have a group in it doing some harmony work, but The Gems had broken up by then.

Pettis then became lead of The Foster Brothers and cut four records for several different labels. The Foster Brothers consisted of Pettis (lead), Donald Clay (1st tenor), Lindsay Langston (2nd tenor), and George Lattimore (bass). Ray replaced original lead LaVerne Gales. The group was so named because everyone called Langston's mother "Mama" and they considered themselves to be foster brothers.

In talking to Pettis, he could originally remember little more than that he had been with the group. With the exceptions of OL' MAN RIVER and THE DARKEST NIGHT (which he co-authored), he couldn't remember any lyrics. When told that there are many who really love the group's sound, Pettis was quite amazed. Each of the members has been given their old records and Pettis assures me that they are able to sing these songs again.

As a final note, The Gems recorded exclusively for Drexel Records. Their discography follows.

# DREXEL DISCOGRAPHY

901	TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER DEED I DO	D-54473 D-54471	THE GEMS	6/54
902	SMALL TOWN MAN SINCE I FELL FOR YOU	D-54475 D-54476	DOROTHY LOGAN (WITH THE GEMS ON B SIDE)	
903	I THOUGHT YOU'D CARE KITTY FROM NEW YORK CITY	D-54478 D-54480	THE GEMS	
904	OL' MAN RIVER YOU'RE TIRED OF LOVE	D-54474 D-54472	THE GEMS	
905	FOR ONLY A MOMENT PU PU PA DOO	D-55481 D-55482	THE GAY NOTES	1955
906	I'M ALL YOURS SUGAR ATLANTIC BOARDWALK	D-55483 D-55484	DAVE TURNER	
907	HE'S LEAPIN' WITH JOY LATER ON IN LIFE	D-55485 D-55486	HATTIE RANDOLPH	
908	PLEASE TELL ME WHEN OW, YOU'RE SO FINE	D-55487 D-55488	RAY PETTIS	
909	ONE WOMAN MAN THE DARKEST NIGHT	D-55491 D-55492	THE GEMS	10/56
910			BOBBY ELVIN	
911	DOES IT HAVE TO BE CHRISTMAS CHRISTMAS HERE, CHRISTMAS THERE	D-54495 D-54496	RAY PETTIS (THESE ARE THE MASTERS ON THE RECORD)	
912	NO HAPS I'M LONELY	D-54499 D-54500	ROY WRIGHT (THESE ARE THE MASTERS ON THE RECORD)	
913				
914				
915	TILL THE DAY I DIE MONKEY FACE BABY	D-54489 D-54490	THE GEMS	1957
916	YOU PROMISED I'VE GOT IT	D-57503 D-57504	ROY WRIGHT	1957
917				
918	WHO'LL VOLUNTEER TRUE LOVE	D-58507 D-58508	ROY WRIGHT	1958

## THE FOSTER BROTHERS

MERCURY 71360	IF YOU WANT MY HEART/SHOW ME	10/58
PROFILE 4004	TRUST IN ME/WHY-YI-YI	
DILLIE 101	LAND OF LOVE/LET'S JAM	
HI MI 3005	I COULD CRY/NEVER AGAIN	



THE GEMS (1955):  
Bobby Robinson, David Taylor,  
Ray Pettis, Wilson James, Rip  
Reed  
(Gems photos courtesy of Bobby  
Robinson)



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# the Cats And the Fiddle

by Pete Grendysa, George Moonoogian, Rick Whitesell  
Interview with Austin Powell by Marv Goldberg

No survey of the vintage R&B vocal group sound would be complete without the story of The Cats and The Fiddle. Besides recording I MISS YOU SO, penned by member Jimmy Henderson and now an established standard which has been re-recorded by artists from Paul Anka to The Orioles to Lionel Hampton's Hamp-tones, the group has a place among the pioneers of the group harmony style which was to become the rage in the 1950's.

The Cats and The Fiddle story goes back nearly forty years, to 1937. There were plenty of black vocal groups even then, as The Mills Brothers were enjoying one of their peaks of popularity which have accompanied their half-century career, and other groups such as The Charioteers and Ink Spots had already launched radio and recording careers which would take them to fame and at least some degree of fortune. The singing styles of these groups vary, but they generally can be described as having sung a fusion between gospel and jazz. With simulated instrumentals which made them sound like a small jazz band, the innovative Mills Brothers inspired groups of proteges to sing in the 30's as The Orioles did twenty years later. So it was that a gentleman named Austin Powell led a group known as the "Harlem Harmony Hounds" (their choice of name was not inhibited by the fact that the group had never been near Harlem!) which broadcast a Mills Brothers-type act over WCFL in Chicago. This group of high school vocalists also took first place in a competition of the Windy City's various quartets and won the honor of appearing with Count Basie at the Grand Terrace Cafe for a full week.

Three other Chicagoans in search of a lead vocalist had similar aspirations for forming a successful vocal group. Ultimately, Jimmy Henderson, Chuck Barksdale and Ernie Price joined Austin Powell to become a four-part harmony group which found its name in a nursery rhyme: The Cats and The Fiddle, which also employed jazz slang. Chuck Barksdale was the "fiddle" who played a stand-up bass while the other "cats" sang and played along. Like many other groups of the period, The Cats and The Fiddle were a vocal-instrumental combo which needed no supporting accompaniment. Besides singing lead, Austin Powell played guitar (note that in the photo, he has a four-stringed tenor guitar which is a regular sized instrument with only the lower four strings); Barksdale sang bass, and played bass fiddle; and Jimmy Henderson and Ernie Price, who sang first and second tenor respectively, both played the tippie - a ten stringed instrument which looked and sounded like a ukelele. The reader shouldn't feel ignorant if the tippie is an unknown item: although used widely for rhythm accompaniment behind early vocal groups such as The Norfolk Jazz Quartet on Decca (their record labels read "Novelty Singing With Tippie"), the instrument is now extinct and not readily available at your friendly music store.

After their formation, The Cats and The Fiddle performed one-nighters in the Chicago area clubs for two years, as well as appearing

at proms, weddings, and graduations. It was at one of these functions that Victor Records' agent Lester Melrose offered to record them on his company's subsidiary label, Bluebird. Of the ensuing output of 21 discs for the label, all but two appeared on the 8000 "race" series.

Although 1950's groups could break through the racial barriers of the music industry, because of an enthusiastic consumer public which wanted something new and different, the pioneer artists of the 30's and 40's were much more inhibited by the industry's rigid distinctions concerning the color of the musicians and the audience their music would be allowed to reach. Billboard, even then the "voice" of the music establishment, made no attempt to conceal its distaste for the music form which was the direct ancestor of the 50's Rock and Roll sound. In an October 19, 1940 review of Bluebird 8535, the reviewer described The Cats' latest effort as "...noisy and meaningless vocal jam stuff that lacks imagination and everything else to make it appeal to anyone but those whose passion for swing is such that they feel as long as it's hot it's good." Further evidence of what the group, and other counterparts of the era, were fighting is presented by the distributors' catalogs and listings which placed The Cats and The Fiddle releases under the unlikely, and inappropriate, heading of "Hill-Billy Music!" Perhaps The Cats and The Fiddle would have received greater recognition in the more enlightened 50's, when popular demand for vocal group harmony overwhelmed the conservative caretakers of the Tin Pan Alley tradition.

In spite of all the disadvantages, the quartet still managed to make a name for itself. They had an interesting movie career, appearing in "Too Hot To Handle" (1938, starring Clark Gable and Myrna Loy) as extras, along with Nat "King" Cole; "Going Places" (1939 with Dick Powell, Anita Louise, and Louis Armstrong) as stable boys who sang JEEPERS CREEPERS; on the soundtrack of "The Clock" (1945, starring Judy Garland and Robert Walker); and they also appeared in many short features (such as "Swingtime In The Rockies") and various all-black productions.

Needless to say, The Cats and The Fiddle acquired their following from their record releases. I MISS YOU SO was by far the most successful release they ever had; the tune was just beginning to break in mid-1940 when its author, Jimmy Henderson, contracted meningitis. Herbie Miles, a first tenor who had formerly been with Powell's original Harmony Hounds' group, replaced Henderson initially. He can be heard on Bluebird numbers 8519 and 8585, and he penned HEP CAT'S HOLIDAY. When Henderson passed away later that year, he was replaced by Lloyd "Tiny" Grimes as first tenor and on guitar.

Grimes had just started playing guitar at this point; his post-Cats and The Fiddle career is chronicled in a separate article. He recounted his days with the group as follows, when interviewed by jazz researcher Stanley Dance: "After I'd been playing (guitar) about seven months, I got with The Cats and The





THE CATS AND THE FIDDLE (1940):

(TOP) ERNIE PRICE, CHUCK BARKSDALE, HERBIE MILES

(BOT) AUSTIN POWELL

(NOTE THAT PRICE HAS A TIPPLE AND POWELL A TENOR GUITAR)

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Fiddle. They had tipples and guitars...and they recorded a number called OH, I MISS YOU SO on Bluebird that made some noise. I stayed with them a year or two, but I wasn't really getting much experience there. I knew more than anybody else, and they were just playing to accompany their singing. We ended up in Los Angeles. They wanted me to go back to New York with them, but they were paying me so cheap, and I said, "My fare will cost just about what I'm going to make at the Apollo Theatre." So I decided to stay out there." As for his Cats and The Fiddle career, "Tiny" Grimes was not on the 1939 session which produced I MISS YOU SO; his first session with the group was on January 20, 1941, in Bluebird's Chicago Studios (where all the group's sides were cut during this period.) After Grimes left in 1942, his place was taken by Miffilin "Pee Wee" Branford.

Chuck Barksdale died in mid-1941 and was replaced permanently by George Steinback. RCA files which show Barksdale as having been present on the October 17, 1941 session date are obviously incorrect. Hank Haslett replaced Austin Powell when Powell was drafted into the army in 1943, and Haslett was in turn replaced by Herbie Miles in 1945. Powell returned in April 1946.

Of course, the effect of these personnel changes was strictly seen in live performances; the musicians' strike of 1942 and war-time shortages of materials used to press records are among the reasons why the group cut no new discs for several years. They toured the nation, from the standard Royal-Howard-Regal-Earle-Apollo Theatre circuit (they played the latter five times annually, and comedian Redd Foxx recalled having seen them there in an ABC-TV interview) to posh supper clubs such as The Beachcomber in Omaha, J'ai Alai Club in Columbus, Pioneer Lounge and Three Deuces in Chicago, and The Cave in Vancouver.

Stylistically, The Cats and The Fiddle were quite unique and bore little resemblance to the other established groups of the period. On uptempo sides such as GANG BUSTERS, there were frenetic scat parts designed to twist the most athletic tongue; ballads such as PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME NOW and I MISS YOU SO could readily pass for recordings of a later vintage in terms of style; while blues-based numbers such as I'M GONNA PULL MY HAIR sound reminiscent of a New Orleans jam session. Tight harmony prevailed over the instrumental accompaniment on all sides, however, and anyone who has the opportunity to hear their Bluebird work will find scores of gimmicks which appeared years later in 50's classics.

Following October 17, 1941, the group did not have a recording session until their switch to the Regis/Manor labels around 1945. A somewhat lacklustre remake of I MISS YOU SO appeared as the group's first Regis/Manor issue, and Ernie Price sang lead. Manor had the group recut several of their earlier Bluebird releases, which had the interesting effect of prompting Victor to reissue the older, original masters in the late 1940's. I MISS YOU SO, originally on Bluebird, was seen on RCA around 1947; on the RCA 50-0000 series of R&B 45's which began in 1949; and following the Jubilee release of The Orioles' version, RCA reissued the weatherworn master on both blue and black 45 labels. As if this wasn't enough, the cut was paired with The Four Clefs' instrumental hit, DIG THESE BLUES, on the "Gold Standard Series" put out by the label.

While RCA was deciding upon ways to release the 1939 gem, Austin Powell's services were regained with the group's disc of THAT'S MY DESIRE. The April 1946 personnel roster

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## THE CATS AND THE FIDDLE



ON MANOR RECORD NO. 1084  
**YOU'RE SO FINE  
DARLING, CAN'T WE  
MAKE A DATE?**

ON MANOR RECORD NO. 1078

**A. WHERE ARE YOU?  
B. I'M GOING TO PULL MY HAIR,  
(AND LET MY WIG FALL DOWN)**

ON MANOR RECORD NO. 1067

**A. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND  
B. I'M STUCK WITH YOU**

ON MANOR RECORD NO. 6000

**A. I MISS YOU SO  
B. MY SUGAR IS SWEET  
TO ME**

Manor

PRESENTATION

included Powell, Branford, Price, and Steinback. Napoleon "Snaggs" Allen (later with The Blenders) was used as a utility replacement for any member who was unable to make an engagement. He never recorded with the group, however, which also holds true for Emmett Slay, who briefly replaced Branford around 1947. Ultimately, Johnny Davis, a tenor who also played conga drums, replaced Branford permanently.

When Davis joined in 1948, an additional fifth member was also taken on: Shirley Moore's arrival definitely changed the group's overall sound. She can be heard singing harmony on I'M AFRAID OF YOU and lead on HONEY, HONEY, HONEY and THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT YOU SAID on Manor. The sound of the group was much more sophisticated stylistically than it had been on the earlier Bluebird discs, with fuller instrumentation and more predominant harmony. Even in the late 40's, The Cats and The Fiddle were ahead of their contemporaries.

The group, with the above personnel, did at least two records for the Philadelphia-based Gotham label, including I'LL NEVER NEVER LET YOU GO which Austin Powell recalls as having broken big in the Philly area. A release for Decca followed, Shirley Moore was replaced by Doris Knighton, and the whole group fell apart by mid-1950. Austin reorganized The Cats and The Fiddle with tenor Johnny Davis, bass Stanley Gaines and not one, but two girls: pianist Beryl Booker, who had been with Steve Gibson in The Toppers, and more recently with The Slam Stewart Trio; and Dottie Smith, who had sung and played drums with The Harlemaires of Atlantic Records' fame. The name of this group was later changed to The Austin Powell Quintet.

Ultimately, Powell and Dottie Smith joined up with Louis Jordan's back-up vocal/instrumental combo where they remained for about three years. They can be heard on discs such as A DOLLAR DOWN (Aladdin 3243).

By the time The Orioles and Ravens were reaching their peaks, The Cats and The Fiddle were no longer an influential group in the music scene; but the contributions made to the group harmony tradition by them are to be found in quantity on their pioneering efforts of the early 40's. Although commonly remembered now for I MISS YOU SO, many other sides done by them are equally outstanding and deserving of recognition by today's fans of vocal group recordings.

(PRIOR PAGE)

THE CATS AND THE FIDDLE (Ca. 1947):

(TOP) GEORGE STEINBACK, AUSTIN POWELL

(BOT) EMMETT SLAY, ERNIE PRICE

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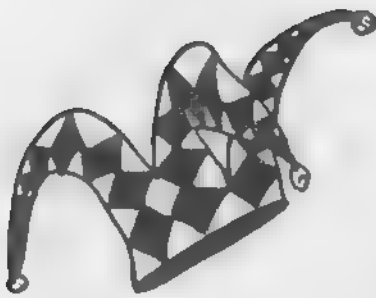
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# THE JESTERS

By Dave Hinckley

Based on interviews with Adam Jackson, Jimmy Smith,  
Melvin Lewis, Donald Lewis and Ronald Jackson  
Conducted by Marv Goldberg, Marcia Vance & Phil Groia

If ever five young men were destined to make R&B recordings, it was The Jesters.

The original Jesters were four students at Cooper Junior High School on Harlem's 120th Street who got together in early 1955: Lenny McKay (lead), Anthony "Jimmy" Smith (second tenor), Leo Vincent (baritone), and Noel Grant (bass). Grant gave the quartet its name, a reference to his favorite Danny Kaye movie, "The Court Jester."

It's obvious from their subsequent music the groups members were R&B fans from some time back - their sound was heavily influenced by the vocal groups of the early 50's. In addition, songs they wrote reflect that influence, both musically and lyrically.

At first they appeared mostly at dances. After a year together, they felt they had a distinctive sound emerging and could use a fifth voice - a first tenor.

Soon thereafter Smith heard Adam Jackson singing on 122nd Street, the story goes, and he was invited to join. He did, and the quintet was set for the next two years.

The Jesters were also linked to R&B by those inter-group relationships which crop up so frequently.

Their first manager was Ann Hayes, whose brother Donald, managed The Schoolboys. Another of her brothers, Roger, was a member of The Schoolboys and later The Collegians, as was Lenny McKay's brother, James.

Further demonstrating their R&B destiny, The Jesters got their big break from Amateur Night at The Apollo. They won

first prize three times, and after the third, Paul Winley offered them a recording contract.

This was around early 1957, at which time they had been contract-hunting for some time. In fact, they had made arrangements to record for Old Town, but backed out at the last minute. (They had also auditioned for Columbia, being told, "Don't call us....")

Early in their Winley career they hooked up with David Clowney, the well-known R&B arranger and piano player who later achieved a measure of fame as Dave "Baby" Cortez. Clowney did most of their arrangements and is given credit for co-authoring several of their songs (although this does not necessarily mean anything: it was fairly common practice for VIP's at a company to take partial author credits, and thus share royalties, whether they helped write a song or not. Winley himself and Bobby Robinson are good examples.)

SO STRANGE was their first release on Winley. Jackson claims to have written it during a subway ride, although Clowney and Winley share author credits. In fact, while they were at it, they should have credited Cole Porter, too - several lines are very similar to verses in SO IN LOVE from "Kiss Me Kate."

Winley released two Jesters' records in 1957, with Jackson and McKay doing leads. The songs are an interesting mix of tenor-lead, up-tempo, teen-oriented R&B that was becoming popular then and the more measured ballads of the earlier 50's. LOVE NO ONE BUT YOU, with Clow-

ney's piano for rhythm and a tenor echo behind the lead, is particularly striking.

The original quintet cut two more records, both released in 1958 and both showing again their influence by other groups. THE PLEA had been a hit by The Chantels in mid-1957, but The Jesters cut it for a January 1958 release because they felt it would sound better done by male voices. (For the flip, they did a studio goof, with everyone switching parts and tenor McKay ending up as bass.)

I LAUGHED was released in June on the Cyclone label, owned by Winley's wife. The song was patterned after EVERYONE'S LAUGHING, a recent Spaniels' hit, while the flip, NOW THAT YOU'RE GONE, shows strong echoes of earlier years.

After the Cyclone release, the original group broke up. McKay jumped to another group, Grant simply left and Vincent was drafted. So Jackson and Smith, the remaining pair, dipped into a local group called The Canaries for a baritone, Melvin Lewis. He had previously been with The Climbers on J&S (whose original lead, incidentally, was Joe Rivers, whom Zell Sanders took out of The Climbers to sing with her daughter as Johnnie and Joe.) Lewis recruited his brother Donald as the new bass.

They decided to remain a quartet because splitting their earnings only four ways meant bigger shares. Although The Jesters were popular, they never became wealthy.

For some extra money, in fact, they had done considerable back-up work for Winley, helping Charlie White (of prior Clovers' fame) and Ann Fleming, who was Winley's wife at the time. They backed Ben E. King at The Apollo during the early 60's. Their own featured appearances were numerous, including a stand at the prestigious Savoy Ballroom.

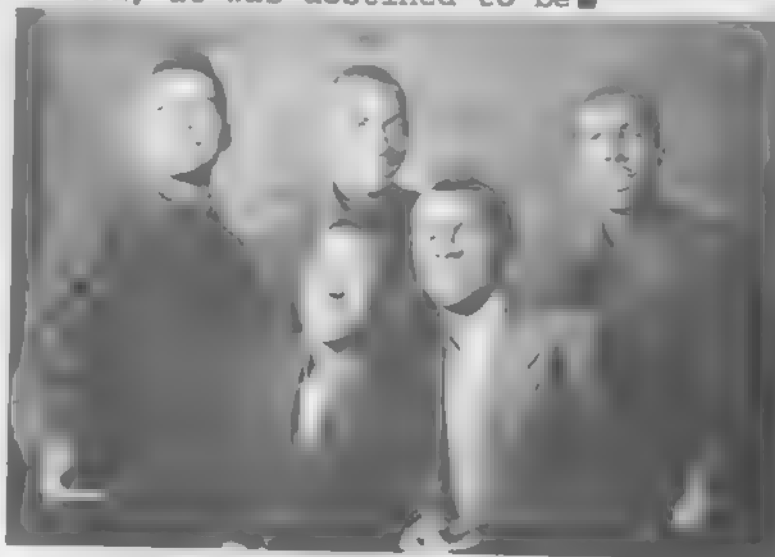
Although the market for their sound was fading, they cut a few 19

more records for Winley in 1960, with Jackson doing most of the lead work. They didn't want to get stale, they said, and records were a good way to attract offers for personal appearances.

At these sessions they dipped into their historical repertoire and re-did THE WIND, which they felt suited their style. It suffers slightly in comparison to The Diablos' original, but it isn't a bad reworking.

They had one more release in 1960 and one the following year before the demand for R&B vocal groups tailed off to almost none. They have not recorded since.

They did stay together, however - not as a full-time group, but doing gigs from time to time. In 1974 they became a quintet again with the addition of Jackson's brother Ronald, a tenor, who naturally came from another group - he sang lead for The Youngtones on X-Tra. They have been doing new material recently and may try to break into the business all over again. After all, it was destined to be.



THE JESTERS (1957):

(TOP) JIMMY SMITH, LEO VINCENT, NOEL GRANT

(BOT) LENNY MCKAY, ADAM JACKSON

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## THE JESTERS DISCOGRAPHY

### WINLEY

- |     |  |       |
|-----|--|-------|
| 218 | SO STRANGE (LMK/AJ)/LOVE NO ONE BUT YOU (LMK/AJ)             | 5/57  |
| 221 | PLEASE LET ME LOVE YOU (LMK/AJ)/I'M FALLING IN LOVE (LMK/AJ) | 10/57 |
| 225 | THE PLEA (AJ)/OH BABY (AJ)                                   | 1/58  |

### CYCLONE

- |      |   |      |
|------|---|------|
| 5011 | I LAUGHED (LMK)/NOW THAT YOU'RE GONE (LMK/AJ) | 6/58 |
|------|---|------|

### WINLEY

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| 242 | THE WIND (AJ)/SALLY GREEN (AJ)                        | 5/60 |
| 248 | THAT'S HOW IT GOES (AJ)/TUTTI FRUTTI (AJ)             | 1960 |
| 252 | UNCLE HENRY'S BASEMENT (AJ)/COME LET ME SHOW YOU (JS) | 1961 |

LMK=LENNY MC KAY; AJ=ADAM JACKSON; JS=JIMMY SMITH



THE JESTERS (1958):

ADAM JACKSON, LENNY MCKAY, NOEL GRANT, LEO VINCENT, JIMMY SMITH



THE JESTERS (1960):

MELVIN LEWIS, DON LEWIS, JIMMY SMITH, ADAM JACKSON



THE JESTERS (1973):

(TOP) DON LEWIS, MELVIN LEWIS, ADAM JACKSON  
(BOT) JIMMY SMITH



# THE 5 PENNIES

Based on interviews with Clifford Curry, Herbert Myers, and John Myers By Marv Goldberg

The 5 Pennies are mostly known for their Savoy recording of MR. MOON. However, the group was active for many years prior to this and most of their recording was done as background singers.

The 5 Pennies' story goes back to Knoxville, Tennessee in mid-1951, when Herbert Myers was nine and his twin brothers, John and James were twelve. As a dare, they and several friends got up on a stage and sang the new hit by The Clovers: DON'T YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU. Afterwards, they decided that the result was not too bad, and they started practicing for real. In no time a group was formed, The Echos, which had the following personnel: John Anderson (lead tenor), James Myers (1st tenor), Herbert Myers (2nd tenor), John Myers (baritone), Charles Holloway (bass - a cousin of The Myers Brothers) and John Gibbs (tenor and piano).

Gibbs left after about six months, followed shortly by Anderson, who lost his voice. For the next two years the lead was done by John Christman, who was brought to them by their manager, Fred Logan.

Early in their careers they were discovered by Logan, a former bootlegger who now had a club. The Echos hung around the club and Logan finally listened to them and started getting them bookings. Since Christman was from Nashville, they went there to do their first recording for a small label. The songs, evidently unreleased, were I DO BELIEVE and COME WITH ME MY LOVE.

During this time they did extensive traveling. As Herb recalls: "During the two years that John Christman was with us, we traveled with a show called 'Irwin C. Miller's Brown Skin Models.' We worked all the one-night theater bookings with stars like Billy Ward and The Dominoes, Little Walter and Big Joe Turner."

Sometime in 1953, Christman left to do a single and another cousin, Benjamin Washington joined as lead. The group was now a true "family affair." Now the group began to rehearse in earnest: "We would rehearse from morning to night. Everyone tried to encourage us to go to New York. We had heard about The Apollo Theater since we first started singing and that's what we rehearsed for. We heard that if you won Amateur Night for two weeks straight, you would win a brand new Rambler."

Through his contacts, Logan sent them off to various record companies to do back-up work. By doing this, they went right to the top. A number one record in the fall of 1953. Unfortunately they never received any label credit, but they were the group behind Faye Adams on SHAKE A HAND! Says Herb: "Somehow we got an audition in Atlanta, Georgia with Herald Records. While in Atlanta, we played The Royal Peacock with Ivory Joe Hunter, Sonny Thompson, Big Maybelle and Faye Adams. During the time we were there, we met Freddy Mendelsohn of Savoy Records." He became interested in them, and got them some bookings, but nothing much came of it then.

In 1955, most of The Echos were attending Austin High in Knoxville. It was here that they met baritone Clifford Curry who was in his senior year and starting to practice songwriting. He was added as a sixth member.

Cliff recalls: "We practiced most of the songs that were popular at the time, trying to sound just like the groups that had them out. Then in between we would practice our own material. I was getting into writing then; I wrote MR. MOON and part of MONEY."

The group's appearances kept them mainly in their own area. "We traveled mostly around the Southeast - Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia - but only on

weekends 'cause we were still in school." The Echos also toured fairs with Royal-American Shows of Tampa, Florida (Leon Claxton's "Harlem In Havana" Show) in 1953, 1955 and 1959.

Since their manager, Fred Logan, had both a club and a boarding house where acts stayed, The Echos were heard by many of the greatest artists of the day. It was through one of these artists that they got to go to New York for an audition with Atlantic Records: Amos Milburn. Somehow Logan managed to queer the deal and they went to Savoy (in Newark) instead, to look up their old friend, Freddy Mendelsohn.

Their first session, in late 1955, started with them backing Big Miller, a blues singer that Savoy had just signed. At the same session they cut MR. MOON and LET IT RAIN. "As MR. MOON was starting to move, Logan, back in Knoxville, had Savoy send him any royalties, which the group never saw."

For reasons known only to them, Savoy management decided to re-name the group. Exit The Echos, enter The 5 Pennies. (Not a very logical choice when you remember that there were six members at the time.)

After one more session and no money, Cliff left to continue his education in Knoxville. Meanwhile, The 5 Pennies had broken with Fred Logan over money troubles and were stranded in Knoxville after a show with The Charms, Orioles, Midnighters, LaVerne Baker and Little Willie John.

Says Herb: "We had to borrow money from friends to get back to New York. We stayed in Newark, most of the time, but we worked all around New York, New Jersey, Maryland, D.C. and North Carolina. We worked during that time with people like Shep and The Heartbeats, The Cadillacs, The El Dorados, The Hearts, The Nutmegs, The Dells, The Coasters, The Five Keys, Frankie Lyman & The Teenagers and so many more."

Soon the army got James Myers, Benjamin Washington and Charles Holloway. However, they didn't all go in at once and John and Herbert kept the group together as best they could with whoever was left. During this period they worked strictly as back-up artists. Herb recalls: "We recorded behind Donnie Elbert, Little Tommy Tucker, Nappy Brown, Little Willie John and so many other artists that I can't remember them all. We recorded for Savoy, King, Chess and Herald. I can't remember all the labels either, but they never put our names on them." They did record WEDDING BELLS and PUT THIS RING ON YOUR FINGER as The 5 Pennies for Herald, but it was never released.

In the mid-1960's John Myers formed a new group in Tampa, Florida: The Larks. This group had Floyd Lawson (lead), Rudolph Hill (tenor), Lindsey Griffin (first tenor and baritone), John Myers (baritone) and Clemmons Daniels (bass). In 1967, this group evolved into The 4 Pennies (Myers, Lawson, Griffin and lead tenor Carl Cuttler). They recorded for Brunswick, but once again there was a numbering problem: some of the sessions had Herb Myers as a fifth voice. (He only did the sessions, however, and didn't travel with them.) The 4 Pennies later became John Myers, Rudolph Hill, James Myers and Willie Earl Drummond (bass) for a while, but then the original 4 Pennies re-formed, changed their name to The Hearts of Stone, and recorded for Motown. An LP was released - "Stop The World, I Want To Get Off" - but when they refused to sign a managerial contract with Motown, promotion was withdrawn.

Cliff Curry stepped back into the spotlight around 1967 with his hit record, SHE SHOT A HOLE IN MY SOUL. He is currently appearing in the Southeast as a single.

As of this writing, Herb, John and Lindsey are together again with a four-piece band. This group, Mixed Emotions, is getting ready to record in the near future. We at Yesterday's Memories wish them the best of luck.

(NOTE: The only facts previously known about The 5 Pennies were reported by Lynn McCutcheon in Bim Bam Boom (Vol 1, No 3, P 22) based on an interview with "Thomas Mathews," who replaced Herbert Myers when he went into the service. Lynn has the reader asking "Who the hell is Thomas Mathews?" Well, Cliff Curry and the Myers Brothers are now asking the same question - they never heard of him! In fact, Herbert was never in the service. Mathews claimed to have joined after ALL IS WELL and to have been on MR. MOON(impossible since they were done at the same session). The unreleased Savoy cuts he gives weren't recorded by The 5 Pennies and Cliff's group, The Bingos, was before The Echos, not after The Pennies. At any rate, Lynn was misled from beginning to end.)

#### THE 5 PENNIES

##### SAVOY

- |      |  |      |
|------|--|------|
| 1181 | ALL IS WELL  | 1/56 |
|      | I'M TO UNDERSTAND - BACK-UP TO<br>BIG MILLER           |      |
| 1182 | MR. MOON(CC)   | 1/56 |
|      | LET IT RAIN(BW)  |      |
| 1190 | MONEY(CC)  | 4/56 |
|      | MY HEART TREMBLES(BW)                                  |      |
|      | LEADS: CC = CLIFFORD CURRY<br>BW = BENJAMIN WASHINGTON |      |

#### THE 4 PENNIES

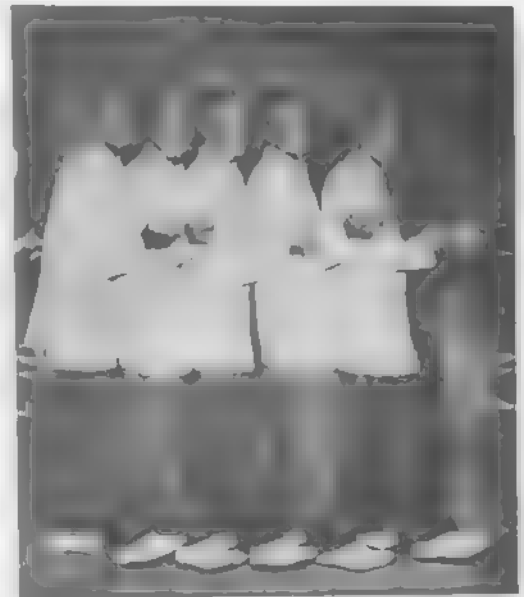
##### BRUNSWICK

- |       |                                   |      |
|-------|-----------------------------------|------|
| 55304 | YOU HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE (FL)     |      |
|       | YOU'RE A GAS WITH YOUR TRASH (FL) |      |
| 55324 | TIS THE SEASON (HM)               |      |
|       | SHAKE A HAND (HM)                 | 1967 |

#### HEARTS OF STONE

##### V.I.P. (MOTOWN SUBSIDIARY)

- |       |   |      |
|-------|---|------|
| 25058 | IT'S A LONESOME ROAD (CC)   | 1970 |
|       | YESTERDAY'S LOVE IS OVER (LG)   |      |
|       | LEADS: FL=FLOYD LAWSON, HM=HERB MYERS,<br>CC-CARL CUTTLER, LG=LINDSEY GRIFFIN |      |



ABOVE-THE ECHOS (1951):  
JOHN ANDERSON, JAMES MYERS, CHARLES HOLLOWAY, JOHN MYERS, HERB MYERS, JOHN GIBBS

RIGHT TOP-THE 5 PENNIES (1956)  
(TOP)CLIFF CURRY  
(MID)JAMES MYERS, CHARLES HOLLOWAY, JOHN MYERS  
(BOT)HERB MYERS (MISSING FROM PHOTO: BENNY WASHINGTON)

RIGHT MIDDLE-THE 5 PENNIES (Cir. 1958)  
BENNY WASHINGTON, HERB MYER, CHARLES HOLLOWAY, JOHN MYERS, JAMES MYERS

RIGHT BOTTOM-THE 4 PENNIES (1967).  
FLOYD LAWSON, CARL CUTTLER, LINDSEY GRIFFIN, JOHN MYERS



# the Teddy Harper story

By Marv Goldberg & Mike Redmond

Research into the careers of R'n'B vocal groups of the early and mid-1950's uncovers the all-consuming nature of the industry. Several hundred groups formed during this period, some containing individuals with superlative talent. But it seems that most of the star-crossed artists were destined for obscurity or tragedy. Few achieved the rewards available to the carefully programmed and managed Rock or Soul groups of today. In the two billion dollar music industry of the mid-1970's it only takes one hit record to make an artist a millionaire.

To serve as a counterpoint to the downbeat aspect of the 50's R'n'B scene are the careers of a few singers who successfully emerged from the period. Success is here measured by professionalism and satisfaction rather than monetarily. Virtually no 50's groups made money; that's why so many lead singers left to become single acts.

Teddy Harper is one of those who learned from his early experiences and utilized them in developing a career that spans two decades. Throughout this period Teddy observed the changing currents in the popular music stream and is able to provide insight into the development of R'n'B music.

During Teddy's musically formative years in the early 1950's the influential artists were The Clovers, Bullmoose Jackson, Wynonie Harris, Billy Eckstein, The Dominoes and The Orioles - all Eastern-based artists. On the West Coast, The Bluejays, The Blackbirds (Robins), The (Hollywood) 4 Flames, Louis Jordan and Bobby Nunn (of The Robins) were popular. Teddy recalls that Roy Hamilton's EBB TIDE in mid-1954 changed the music: "The whole world opened up; The Midnighters came on the scene, B.B. King.....," and the floodgates opened wide.

Teddy's own musical background began in his church choir in San Diego, California. "I never thought I'd be a good singer; I just liked to sing. I didn't think I was going to make any money at it." But in 1954 aspiring singers were combining to form groups at an ever-increasing rate: "To give you an idea of what I'm talking about, in those days you could walk three blocks and within those three blocks somebody was singing - no matter where you were." Teddy was no exception and he formed The Capris (later The Aladdins - see Record Exchanger Vol. 3, No. 3).

There were two basic reasons, Teddy says, for the formation of so many groups. The group harmony replaced instrumentation which the singers generally didn't have available to them; and interestingly enough, group singing was a challenge and you had to work harder. "If you're a single artist, you don't have anybody to depend on except yourself; but if you work in a group you have to think about all the facets of music."

Teddy indicates why we are all into R'n'B today: "It had to be the sweetest music anybody could ever attempt to sing or write. You didn't have the arrangements you have today - all you had was a tenor, bass and baritone."

In 1953 various people would congregate at Teddy's house to sing. About a dozen of them eventually formed their own groups. In addition to the members of The Capris (Alfred

Harper, Edward Williams and Gaylord Green) there was also Ronald Richie, Clifford Hearst and Edward Duncan (no relation to Cleve). The circle of San Diego singers enlarged as they met people from Los Angeles, who came down to appear at shows at The Victory and Lincoln Theaters. Ted's brother Reginald was the manager of The Victory, where shows were held on Thursday nights. They were MC'd by Hunter Hancock, the Alan Freed of the West Coast, who presided over a program on KPOP. (Hunter's secretary, incidentally, was Margie Williams, Tony's wife.)

The interaction between the San Diego and Los Angeles groups continued as Teddy went "Up to L.A. to listen to what everybody was doing - at Bobby Byrd's house and Gaynell Hodge's house." (Bobby Byrd, of The Hollywood Flames later became famous as Bobby Day.) If we close our eyes, we can imagine about 20 later-to-become-known singers meeting at Bobby Byrd's house and forming themselves into 4 or 5 groups to practice the R'n'B hits of the day along with their own compositions. Multiply this scene by about a half dozen - there were several houses where singers met - and you have the nucleus for the West Coast sound.

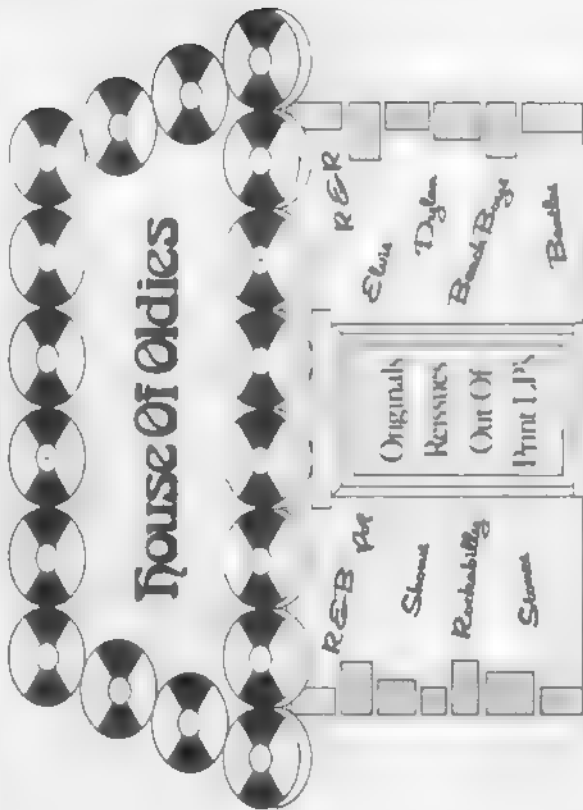
Back in San Diego, Teddy and The Capris continued to develop: "We practiced every day. Everybody in the neighborhood would come out on the lawn and listen to us practice." Notice the contrast between suburban San Diego where they could sit on lawns and urban New York where practicing was done on street corners and in hallways.

Johnny Otis discovered The Capris at The Victory Theater and they eventually recorded as The Aladdins on the Aladdin label. Ted recalls that as far as they were concerned: "40 records in those days was a hit - as long as each girl in the neighborhood had one. We didn't think about the money, all we wanted to do was sing. \$22.50 a side, each - that's all we wanted. All we thought about was the \$22.50 a side, the girls and the big gigs, and who'd try to steal the show."

In those days the group was an independent entity without the managers, accountants and attorneys, who are prolific in the industry today. Ted indicates that they didn't have any choreographers, or accompanists working out musical arrangements - they relied on each other. "What was good about it was all the hell we went through; all the groups stuck together until they couldn't make it anymore - because there wasn't any money out there for you. Today everyone knows the (monetary) value of music. When we were coming up, if we'd tell our mothers we had a hit record they'd laugh. Today, if a kid is interested, his parents are right behind him 'cause they know the value. If the majority of entertainers when we were coming up had their parents behind them, they'd be in great positions today."

Ted's statement is borne out by the successful activities of the family-oriented acts such as The Jackson Five, Osmond Brothers and DeFranco Family. The parents of each of these young groups have guided their activities throughout their careers. To a large extent, the artistic and financial success of these artists is a function of their parents' involvement.

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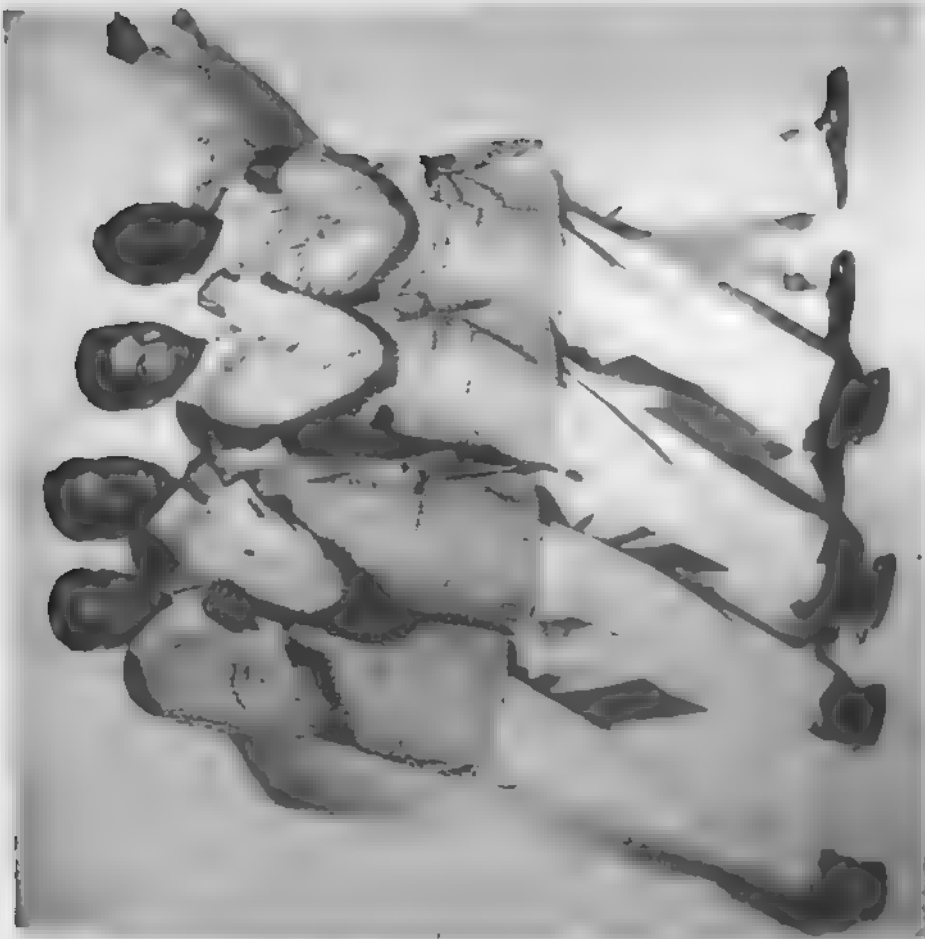
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ABOVE-THE ALADDINS (1954):  
EDDIE WILLIAMS, GAYLORD GREEN, AL  
HARPER, TEDDY HARPER





In terms of the evolution of R'n'B music over the last 20 years, Teddy suggests an interesting framework for analysis. He feels that there are four major phases that the music has gone through. At the outset, Clyde McPhatter and Jimmy Ricks were the models to emulate: "When I started off, all anyone talked about was Clyde McPhatter and Jimmy Ricks - that's the top and bottom - everybody was trying to be one or the other." This position has been verified by prior studies of these giants, and the significant influence they've had on the music. (Another phenomenon, Sonny Til, put in the same class by Eastern singers, doesn't seem to have had that big an impact on the West Coast.)

Moving into the later 50's, Ted feels that James Brown set the pace for the development of the soul sound. "Soul Brother Number One" not only created the model for subsequent artists; but also influenced British rock groups such as Mick Jagger and The Rolling Stones.

In the early 1960's Teddy points out that the arrangements and programmed sound became dominant. Wilson Pickett and The Temptations were leading exponents of this movement.

The final change in the music, to date, was the emergence of the young group: The Jackson Five. They signaled a new mobility wherein group members emerge from the act for a solo and then return as an integral part of the group. Actually, the sound of The Jackson Five represents a return to the mid-50's, when "Kid-sound" groups were emerging - along with the rapid proliferation of older-sounding groups.

Of Rock and Roll in its heyday: "Rock and Roll was being played 24 hours a day. When Rock and Roll came out everybody was doing it - even little babies, man! During the 1950's, that was the first time the kids were even being noticed."

Commenting on the Rock and Roll giants, Teddy thinks that Chuck Berry was the best. Had Berry and Fats Domino been white they would have "wiped out" Elvis Presley. In fact, Teddy has witnessed all the aspects of racism during his career. During his days with The Aladdins there were two waiting lines for the theaters - one white, one black. When he appeared with The Penguins in the South, the group couldn't even go into the dining room. They had to eat in the kitchen - while making \$25.00 a week.

That's why the Black theater circuit represented such an attractive alternative. In particular, The Apollo in New York had a strong magnetism. "Every Black entertainer in the world wanted to play The Apollo. If you can play The Apollo, you can play anywhere. It's prestige - and it makes you a better singer."

Has the music industry changed much over the years? "It's still a cutthroat no-good industry; but you're an entertainer and you love it." The classic love-hate relationship that many entertainers harbor!

Teddy Harper's career encompassed work with some of the finest vocal groups. He began with The Aladdins, one of those groups which is so typical in R'n'B. They made a few records and then seemingly vanished. But Ted continued on with two of the supergroups - The Penguins and The Coasters. Along the way he also made several solo records, such as WATER BOY WATUSI/STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW on Signet, and sang, for appearances, with The Medallions, Colts, Cufflinks, Hollywood Flames and Bob and Earl.

Teddy recalls his start with The Penguins in 1956. The Penguins were in San Diego and Ted met Curtis Williams. The Aladdins were

breaking up because they weren't getting anywhere. Curtis said "Well, get ready to go to New York with us." (Note: This version changes somewhat the sequence of personnel changes reported by us in our Penguins' article in Record Exchanger, Vol. 3, No. 6). The Penguins had originally been Cleve Duncan, Curtis Williams, Dexter Tisby and Bruce Tate. When Tate left, he was replaced by bass Randolph Jones. In the summer of 1956, Dexter and Randy left and Teddy and Ray Brewster (later to go with The Cadillacs) were recruited to replace them. A short time later, Dexter and Randy wanted to return, so Ted and Ray stepped aside. Ted then returned to San Diego to re-form The Aladdins and they did some gigs around San Diego for about six months. Then one day in late 1957 Cleve Duncan came to Teddy and said, "Hey man, we're getting ready to do this album so why don't you come with us." Ted agreed and the result was the "Cool Cool Penguins" album (Dooto LP 242).

Ted had replaced Curtis Williams, one of the founders of The Penguins. Curtis was aggressive and liked life on the road so he joined The Hollywood Flames. Ted says that Curtis has a "magnificent baritone voice." Curtis' is the first voice heard on the beginning of Bobby Day's LITTLE BITTY PRETTY ONE. (The Hollywood Flames were the back-up group - they were on Class as the "Satellites." In fact a whole stage show could be - and was - made out of this group. Bobby Day with his back-up, The Hollywood Flames in their own right, and Bob and Earl - originally Bobby Day and Earl Nelson, both Flames members - would appear on the same bill.) Ted also contends that Randy Jones is one of the greatest entertainers in the business. He also sang with The Cadets and the FOOT STOMPIN' Flames.

Ted feels that EARTH ANGEL is the most beautiful song ever written, "And it was done better than any sound I ever heard." Concerning the relationship between EARTH ANGEL and Jesse Belvin's DREAM GIRL, Ted thinks that Curtis Williams and Jesse Belvin probably both sat down and showed off their new songs to each other, each one taking something from the other. (They wouldn't have called it stealing.)

The Penguins finally broke up because nothing was happening to them. There was no falling out among the members; they were only doing local gigs in L.A. In late 1962, Ted, Dexter Tisby and Randy Jones were staying at The Watkins Hotel in L.A. "We were in the dining room when Cornell (Gunter) came in and we got talking and decided to form a Coasters group. This was two days after he (Cornell) had left touring with Dinah Washington. The new Coasters group immediately started working the L.A. area. They continued on until around Christmas 1965 when they went to Hawaii. Teddy bought a club and left the group."

He came back in 1967 and rejoined Cornell, Randy and Bobby Steger (a tenor who had replaced Dexter). This time he stayed until 1970 when he grew tired of singing and started doing field work for Redevelopment in California. While with them in 1972, he was staying at The Booker T. Washington Hotel in San Francisco when Cornell walked in. So much for Ted's retirement! Since then it's been Ted and Cornell and Nathaniel "Buster" Wilson (who replaced Randy Jones - when Bobby Steger left, he wasn't immediately replaced). In 1973 Leroy Binns, second tenor and baritone (formerly of The Charts and Cadillacs) was added.

The Coasters became an integral part of the Rock and Roll revival and have appeared at major theaters, clubs and television shows all over the Country.

However, Ted maintains that even if the revival scene hadn't emerged, The Coasters would still have been working.

The Teddy Harper Story: Two decades of contributing to and observing Rhythm and Blues and Rock and Roll. And, as a tribute to the music industry, Ted, after twenty years, can observe that "I see something significant happening to music every morning when I turn the radio on. There was never a day I turned the radio on and didn't hear something I liked." ■



TOP RIGHT-THE PENGUINS (1958):

(TOP)DEXTER TISBY, RANDOLPH JONES,  
CLEVE DUNCAN  
(BOT)TEDDY HARPER

RIGHT-THE COASTERS (1974):

(TOP)BUSTER WILSON, CORNELL GUNTER  
(BOT)TEDDY HARPER



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## THE TINY GRIMES STORY

By Peter Grendysa

Lloyd "Tiny" Grimes was born in Newport News, Virginia in July, 1917, and played drums and piano before switching to guitar in 1938. He joined The Cats And The Fiddle (other members: Austin Powell, guitar; Ernie Price, ukelele; and Chuck Barksdale (bass) in 1940 and his first appearance on records was with that group.

He left The Cats and The Fiddle in Los Angeles in 1942 and shortly thereafter started working with bass player Slam Stewart. This duo soon became a trio with the addition of pianist Art Tatum. This trio was very popular on the West Coast for nearly two years.

The Art Tatum Trio dissolved in 1944, Tatum going on as a single and Tiny forming his own quartet with Joe Springer, piano, Jimmy Butts, bass; and Edward Nicholson, drums. Tiny and his quartet returned to New York City and provided backing for Billie Holiday at many of New York club dates. With the addition of Charlie Parker, this group recorded for Savoy in September, 1944, as The Tiny Grimes Quintet; and with John Hardee, for Blue Note in August, 1946, as The Tiny Grimes Swingtet.

The first Atlantic sides by Tiny Grimes were cut at the end of December, 1947, the quintet then consisting of Grimes, guitar; John Hardee, tenor sax; George Kelly, piano; Lucille Dixon, bass; and Sonny Payne, drums. Following this session Grimes went to Gleason's famous night club in Cleveland and formed the renowned Harlem Highlanders - later called The Rockin' Highlanders. The combo all wore kilts on stage, and the act was expanded to include singing and dancing. Personnel of this very well-received group was: Grimes,

guitar; Red Prysock, tenor sax; Sir Charles Thompson, piano; Herb Gordy, bass; and Jerry Potter, drums. Atlantic matrices 130-139 were apparently recorded in Cleveland by this group in May, 1948 and purchased by the label in August of the same year. A couple of rare vocals by Red Prysock are included in this batch and Red manages some competent vocalizing without jeopardizing his brother Arthur's reputation in the slightest.

The Harlem Highlanders toured extensively, worked summers at Week's Tavern in Atlantic City and frequently appeared at the Apollo Theater in New York. After one more Atlantic session in March, 1949, Grimes recorded for a variety of labels throughout the early 50's, including United and Red Robin. His star tenor man Red Prysock joined the famous Tiny Bradshaw Band and is heard on Bradshaw's hit record SOFT (King 4577). Subsequently, Red formed his own band, later called The Rock N' Rollers and recorded many fine rocking instrumentals for Mercury well into the late 50's.

Tiny Grimes brought his group, by now called The Rockin' Highlanders, into New York in January, 1953 and made his last



NOTE: RED PRYSOCK DOES THE VOCAL

session for Atlantic. This session included two vocals by the remarkable Screaming Jay Hawkins, although it is unclear whether Jay was the regular vocalist with The Grimes' band or just used on this one date. Unfortunately, these vocals were never released.

There can be no doubt that Tiny Grimes' early Atlantic records were very important to the company, and they may even have made the difference between success and failure for the new label. Grimes, then as now, was considered a fine, swinging guitarist by jazz buffs and his name on the Atlantic artist roster carried with it a great deal of prestige.

Grimes is still active in jazz at the time of this writing, having appeared in recent years with the bands of Duke Ellington, Milt Buckner, Jay McShann, and Earl Hines - including European tours.

(Editor's Note: The Harlem Highlanders referred to in this article was not the original group with this name. The true Harlem Highlanders formed shortly after the 1939 World's Fair as a merger between two vocal and dance groups - The Box Brothers and The Three Gobs. The Highlanders consisted of Napoleon "Snaggs" Allen (guitar), Pete Glover (bass fiddle, vocalist & arranger) - both from The Box Brothers - and Eddie Johnson (dancer), Sonny Austin (dancer), Baby Lawrence (dancer) and Willie Jones (drums) - from The Three Gobs.

(The group, in kilts, would sing several Scottish numbers, such as ROAMIN' IN THE GLOAMIN' and follow that up with dancing. They were primarily a stage act, but did some back-up recording behind trumpeter Hot Lips Page, notably I AIN'T GOT NOBODY. They broke up around 1945 and Tiny Grimes formed a totally different group later on. The above information came from an interview with Napoleon Allen.)

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# TINY GRIMES "ATLANTICOGRAPHY"

DECEMBER 29, 1947, NEW YORK		
111	PROFOUNDLY BLUE	858
112	BLUE HARLEM	854
113	THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC	858
114	BOOGIE-WOOGIE BARBECUE	854
MAY 1, 1948, CLEVELAND (?)		
130	ANNIE LAURIE	865
131	HOT IN HARLEM (MOVIN' OUT)*	869
132	FLYING HIGH (HIGH FLYIN')	920
133	DARK EYES	-
134	NIGHTMARE BLUES (RED'S BLUES) VOC. PRY SOCK	869
135A,B	JUMPIN' AT GLEASON'S PARTS 1 & 2	-
136	MIDNIGHT SPECIAL (SEE SEE RIDER, INST.)	865
137	TINY'S THEME	-
138	SEE SEE RIDER VOCAL RED PRY SOCK	894
139	LADY BE GOOD	-
MARCH 16, 1949, NEW YORK		
211	JEALOUSY	886
212	SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK	886
213	ROCK THE HOUSE	894
214	JUMPIN' AT GLEASON'S	920
215	UNTITLED INSTRUMENTAL	-
216	UNTITLED INSTRUMENTAL	-
JANUARY, 1953, NEW YORK		
984	BEGIN THE BEGUINE	990
985	THE MAN I LOVE	990
986	SCREAMIN' BLUES VOC. JAY HAWKINS	-
987	MY DREAM VOC. JAY HAWKINS	-
988	PEANUT VENDOR	-

## ATLANTIC SINGLE RECORDS

### TINY GRIMES QUINTET

854	BLUE HARLEM/BOOGIE WOOGIE BARBECUE	RELEASED	2/48
858	PROFOUNDLY BLUE/THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC		5/48
865	ANNIE LAURIE/MIDNIGHT SPECIAL		10/48
869	HOT IN HARLEM/NIGHTMARE BLUES		1/49
886	JEALOUSY/SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK		10/49
894	SEE SEE RIDER/ROCK THE HOUSE		1/50

### TINY GRIMES AND HIS BAND

920	JUMPIN' AT GLEASON'S/FLYING HIGH		9/50
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### TINY GRIMES AND HIS ROCKIN' HIGHLANDERS

990	BEGIN THE BEGUINE/THE MAN I LOVE		4/53
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\*(TITLES IN PARENTHESES ARE THOSE ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED TO THE SONGS.)

(LABEL PHOTO BY DENNIS MILLER)

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# CORRECTIONS

Hollywood Flames' article: There were actually two Jackie Lees. Earl Nelson recorded THE DUCK under that name for the West Coast Mirwood label. The Jackie Lee on Swan was a white piano player from Philadelphia, who had previously recorded for Essex. (Thanks to Steve Applebaum for this.) Also, from Alan Weinman, at least one Turks' record was by The Hollywood Flames - Cash 1042 IT CAN'T BE TRUE/WAGON WHEELS. The label lists the group as David Ford, Bobby Byrd, Curley Dinkins and Gaynell Hodge. "The Turks" was a name used by Gaynell for whatever group he was recording with at the time. Bobby Byrd remembers most of The Turks' recordings, but is unsure which ones he was one. He does remember rehearsing WAGON WHEELS. We hope to be able to interview Gaynell soon.

Also from Steve Applebaum, an addition to The Rainbows' discography: In late 1959, John Berry (as Sonny Spencer) recorded GILEE/OH BOY (Memo 17984). GILEE appeared for one week (Nov. 16 - Nov. 26, 1959) on the WIBG (Philadelphia) "Future Forty."

From Tony Tisovec we got the following additions to The Flares' discography (issue #2):

## FELSTED

8604 LOVING YOU

HOTCHA CHA-CHA BROWN

## PRESS

2800 ROCK AND ROLL HEAVEN  
PART 2

2808 SHIMMY AND STOMP  
HAND CLAPPIN'

2810 DO IT IF YOU WANNA  
THE MONKEY WALK

2814 I DIDN'T LOSE A DOGGONE  
THING

WRITE A SONG ABOUT ME (WITH  
COOKIE JACKSON)

Ferdie Gonzalez corrects the title of Press 2807 (Flares) to YON HE GO. He's also come up with another Kodoks on Wink - (#1004) TWISTA TWISTIN'/LET'S ROCK (1961). Finally, concerning The Red Caps,

Beacon 7220 should read GET OFF THAT KICK; Mercury 8069 should read I'D LOVE TO LIVE A LIFETIME FOR YOU; and an additional George Tindley & Modern Red Caps - Smash 1768 I COULDN'T CARE LESS/DONE BEING LONELY (1962).

From Ollie Jones and the files of RCA, the following additions to The Cues' article (issue #3): The Cues on Lamp 8007 (SCOOCHIE SCOOCHIE/FORTY 'LEVEN DOZEN WAYS) are the same group as in the article. Jesse Stone ran the label for Aladdin in 1954 and then switched The Cues and The Cookies to Atlantic. Ollie remembers Jesse Stone having dealings with the California-based Mesner Brothers and The Cues doing some sides for them. Harder to pin down is the record by The Cues on Jubilee 5201 (ONLY YOU/I FELL FOR YOUR LOVING). Ollie doesn't remember the titles, but admits that it could be his Cues (unless ONLY YOU is The Platters' song, in which case it's not his group).

The Cues also recorded under another name: The Four Students on RCA's Groove subsidiary. This was a name that RCA reserved for a general back-up group, and may not always be The Cues. Definitely by them are the following:  
GROOVE

0110 (4 STUDENTS)

HOT ROTTEN SODA POP  
SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR

0139 (VARETTA DILLARD &)  
DARLING LISTEN TO THE WORDS  
OF THIS SONG

MAMA DON'T WANT

0152 (VARETTA DILLARD &)  
I'M GONNA TELL MY DADDY  
CHERRY BLOSSOM

0149 (CHARLES CALHOUN &)  
JAMBOREE  
(NO GROUP ON FLIP) (THIS IS  
POSSIBLY JESSE STONE UNDER  
HIS REAL NAME)

Again there are some doubtful areas. Sessions in which The 4 Students backed up Sue Allen, Big John Greer and Lil McKenzie

are not to be found in the RCA files and Ollie doesn't remember any of the names or titles. He's sure, however, that The Cues/4 Students never backed up Piano Red. There's always the chance, of course, that RCA used a different studio group as the "4 Students" for these sessions. As a digression, Ollie also remembers that the original Drifters, without Clyde McPhatter, did a lot of back-up work for Atlantic.

**WANTED:** In good condition: HELEN, Cardells, Middletone; 219 TRAIN, Moonglows, Chance; BABY PLEASE, Moonglows, Chance; I MAY BE SMALL, 5 Chances, Chance; CHERIE, Hideaways, MGM; IF I GIVE MY HEART TO YOU, Quadrells, Kareem; PLAN FOR LOVE, Flamingos, Chance. Originals only. NICK LAMIA, 10131 Pearl Street, Pittsburgh, Penna. 15235.

**WANTED:** \$50.00 cash offered for photo of Marquees on Grand. Also cash or records traded for group photos of the late 1940-1960 era. Arthur Berlowitz, 801-14 Tilden Street, Bronx, N.Y. 10467.



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## BITS & PIECES

By Marcia Vance

Billy Vera's newest recording is BACK DOOR MAN on Midland International. It's time for another hit for this talented singer/songwriter/band leader.....Anne Winley (Paul's wife) out with TALK TO ME - naturally on the Paul Winley label.....Barnaby Records has recently issued five albums containing much material from the Cadence label.....Milt Grayson (at one time with The Dominoes) out on Mercury with THE DISCO WALK.....Bill Haley & The Comets' new album titled "Rock Around The Country" on GNP Crescendo, includes an up-dated version of ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK.....Ed Townsend now on Curtom with an album called simply "Now".....Finally out on Buddah, "Black Satin Featuring Fred Parris" - best cut in my opinion is a totally different version of IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT. Most romantic version ever.....Chuck Jackson has a hit in NEEDING YOU, WANTING YOU on All Platinum.....Marcel's latest is LUCKY OLD SUN on St. Clair... Flamingos' latest album due out sometime this month. No information available at press time. Details in next issue.

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